

X *g. harrell music*

4 October 2006

Federal Communications Commission
RE: Proceeding 06-121
Effects of Media Consolidation

Gentlemen:

Your rule change of 2003 has adversely affected the U. S. Music Industry.

It has also adversely affected those American musicians who create and perform popular music, and those American citizens who enjoy listening to and watching those popular music performances.

One of the greatest strengths of American Music throughout its history has been its diversity, and the ability of diverse music producers and publishers to make their music accessible to the general public.

The net effect of your rule changes has been less access of popular music to the public, and homogenization of newly created popular music.

One need only read astute criticisms in major national newspapers and magazines to know that contemporary American popular music is being criticized worldwide for its lack of inventiveness and replication. Also, in blogs and in personal online critiques of recent popular recordings, we read individuals commenting more often than we'd like, "Everything sounds the same. What's the difference?" From a strictly market point of view, the sales charts for new American popular music and videos and films also echo this trend. Basically, we're losing ground in the global music world for lack of appealing, innovative and competitive product.

This has come about, not for lack of imagination and talent and creativity from our professional American musicians, writers, performers and producers. Our American music talent is among the very best in the world. Rather, this has come about by these talented and imaginative creative people being forced to conform their music to the music playlists of a handful of tightly controlling broadcasters, in order to be heard at all. And as conglomeration increases, the stranglehold on the public's access to popular music is tightened.

If your present media consolidation rules were in effect in the 1960's, one can only wonder if present American music legends like Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin, Janis Joplin, Willie Nelson, and many others like them would have ever been discovered. Or

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would they have been passed over by a handful of conglomerate broadcasters who could not find room for them in their tightly controlled music broadcasting playlists?

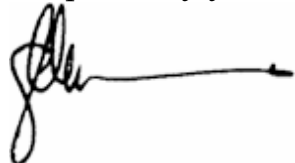
Popular music production in America is, and has always been, regional and local. Most people recognize our different varieties of American music by city, region or category, not by one homogenized national identity. Historically, the world knows our popular music product very well, and people around the world have grown up on the “Nashville sound”, the “Detroit sound”, the “Memphis sound”, the “L.A. sound”, the “New York sound”, and others. Artists and music in these genres were only able to penetrate the marketplace because of the very openness of the marketplace, not because it was tightly controlled by a few. And because musical styles are local, not national, it is important for local broadcasters to be allowed to air what they consider worthy and worthwhile new popular music. Local broadcasters cannot effectively represent the region or style of music that is theirs to represent, if their playlists are dictated by a conglomerate media committee in a faraway office skyscraper, who, by its very nature, is detached and out of touch with the regional musical landscape.

The inconvenient reality is this handful of corporate conglomerates are imposing their corporate tastes onto the American listening and viewing public. The present media moguls have under their corporate umbrellas their own record companies and music publishing houses. So the natural corporate instinct for self-interest is to reduce their playlists to one containing mostly music from the recording companies and publishing houses they own, or are under their control. To my mind, this raises serious conflict-of-interest issues.

In simple summation, by allowing fewer media outlets, you in effect reduce the access of both the American consumer and the American artist to the American music marketplace.

I would respectfully suggest you reconsider your 2003 ruling, decentralize nationwide music programming, and give access to America’s airwaves back to the American people and American producers (subject of course to your standing regulations concerning content). Up until 2003, this is the way things have successfully worked, and, in my opinion, exactly how they should continue to be allowed to work.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G. Harrell', followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Gordon Lowry Harrell

Composer, Arranger, Performer, Producer, and Retail Consumer of American popular music

